

Appl. No. : **09/530,069**
Filed : **July 3, 2000**

REMARKS

Claims 9-15 are pending in this application. Claims 1-8 and 16 have been cancelled without prejudice as drawn to nonelected subject matter. Claim 9 has been amended. Support for the amendment is found in the specification as filed on page 13 at lines 24-26.

Claim Rejection - 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 9-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite as regards the phrase “spontaneous etching is substantially avoided.” Claim 9 has been amended to delete this phrase and recite that the inert gas and oxygen-containing gas are present in “a ratio of from 30:1 to 1:1.” In view of the foregoing amendment, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections of Claims 9-15.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any remaining concerns that might prevent the prompt allowance of the application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below.

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Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

Dated: _____

By: _____

Rose M. Thiessen
Registration No. 40,202
Attorney of Record
Customer No. 20,995
(619) 235-8550